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THE TYCHAION AT IŞ-ŞANAMÊN ¹

[PLATE XIII]

THIS building is at Iş-Şanamên, ancient Aere, in the northern part of the plain of the Haurân, and has been frequently mentioned by travellers. It was a temple sacred to Tyche, the

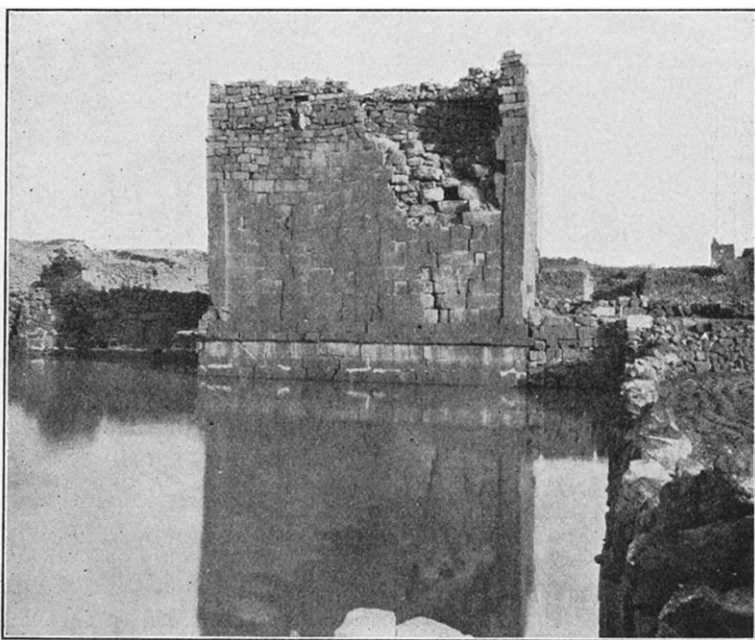
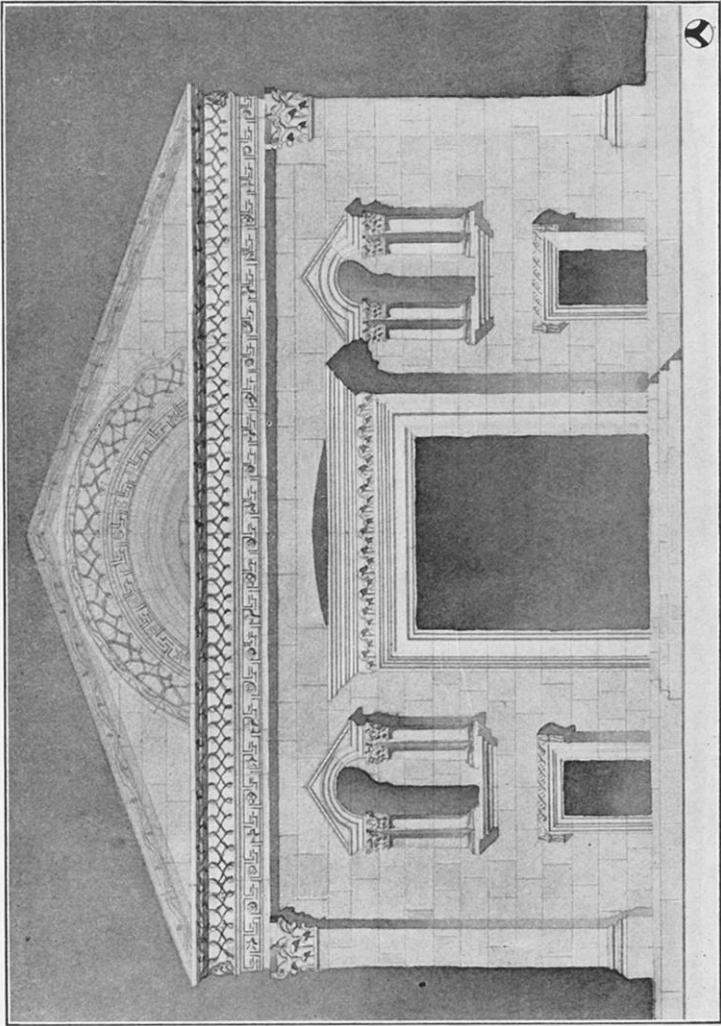


FIGURE 1. — THE TYCHAION AT IŞ-ŞANAMÊN.

goddess of fortune, a Tychaion, built in the twelfth year of the Emperor Commodus (192 A.D.), as we learn from a Greek

¹ Through the kindness of Professor Howard Crosby Butler, who has loaned me his notes and photographs taken on the American Archaeological Expedition to Syria, I have been able to make the restoration of the temple here presented.



THE TYCHAION AT IŞ-ŞANAMÊN — FRONT VIEW, RESTORED.

inscription over the doorway.¹ The structure is in a fair state of preservation, having been used as a mosque until comparatively recent times. The front wall has been partially rebuilt and the great lintel has been reset at a lower level, while the apse or tribune has been filled up with rough stone. It is from photographs of these parts and from measurements taken

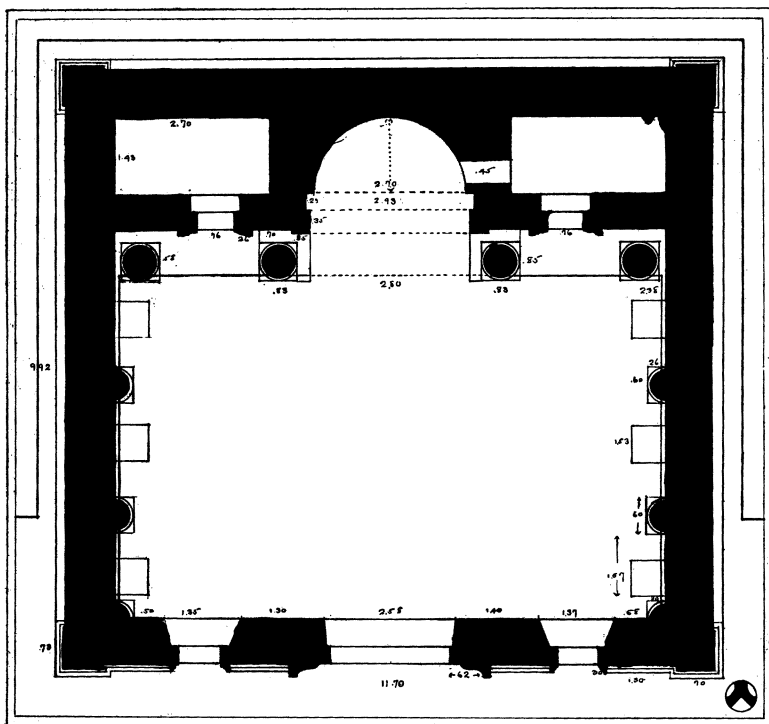


FIGURE 2. — PLAN OF TYCHAION.

on the spot that this restoration has been attempted. The location of the building is particularly interesting, as the temple is surrounded on three sides (Fig. 1) by the waters of a large rectangular birkeh or reservoir, which was inclosed by a colonnade.

In plan the building is nearly square (Fig. 2) and is entered from the north end, where there are three doorways, a large

¹ Waddington, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*, 2413 f.; C.I.G., 4554.

portal between two smaller entrances. Opposite the entrance, that is at the south, is an apse or tribune with a small rectangular chamber on either side. The chambers are in two stories,



FIGURE 3. — INTERIOR OF TYCHAION.

both of which have doorways opening into the naos on either side of the apse. The floor of the apse is elevated above that of the main room, and a narrow doorway leads from the apse

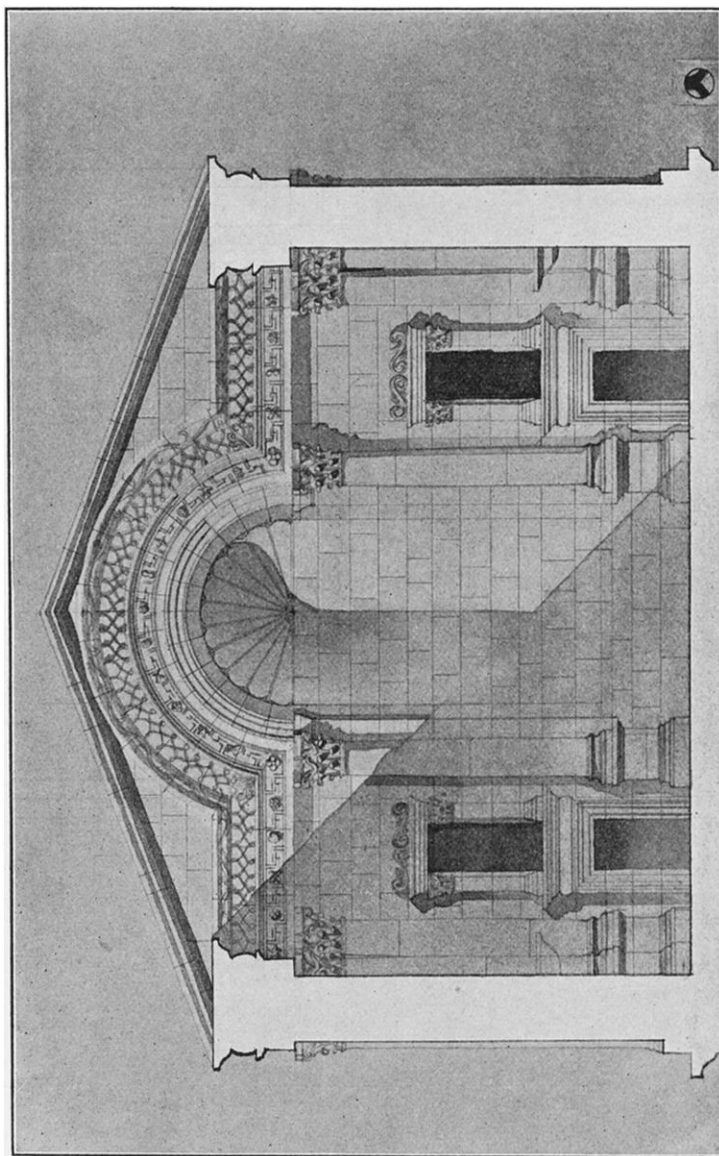


FIGURE 4. — CROSS-SECTION OF TYCHAION, RESTORED.

into the upper chamber on the west side. The apse is hidden from view on the exterior, being enclosed within the square of the temple plan; thus making the naos shorter from front to rear than from side to side.

Although comparatively plain on the exterior, the temple was wonderfully rich in interior decoration. An order of four Corinthian columns raised on pedestals stands free from the south wall (Figs. 3 and 4). The columns carry an entablature on either side above the openings of the side chambers, and support an arch, upon which the members of the entablature are carved, above the apse. Half columns, two on either side, are ranged along the side walls (Fig. 5) and quarter columns are placed in the northeast and northwest angles. These carry an entablature along the wall which reproduces the rich carving of that on the south wall. Brackets, for the support of statues, protrude from the wall between the half columns. There is no evidence to show that there were ever columns in the naos corresponding to the half columns on the side walls, and supporting arches in front of the apse and architraves on either side for the support of a stone roof. Moreover, if there had been some such arrangement of columns, there would probably have been in addition half columns on the north wall, corresponding to those on the south, to carry the arches and architrave across this face. Since, however, there are absolutely no signs of any such columns, it is probable that the naos had only this one interior order. In fact, the other arrangement would bring the arches so near together that the effect of the beautiful carving on them would have been lost. It is improbable that the building was roofed with wood, which at this period was becoming scarce in the Haurân,¹ and it is more than likely that the naos was left open to the sky, while a small roof was placed over the apse where the problem presented no difficulties (Fig. 6). Even if wooden girders had been used as the support of a roof, it is likely that the holes in which the ends of the beams were placed could still be seen. However, no such marks have been found, and this solution seems to be untenable. Although such

¹ De Vogüé, *La Syrie Centrale, Architecture civile et religieuse*, p. 6; Butler, *Architecture and Other Arts in Syria*, p. 11.

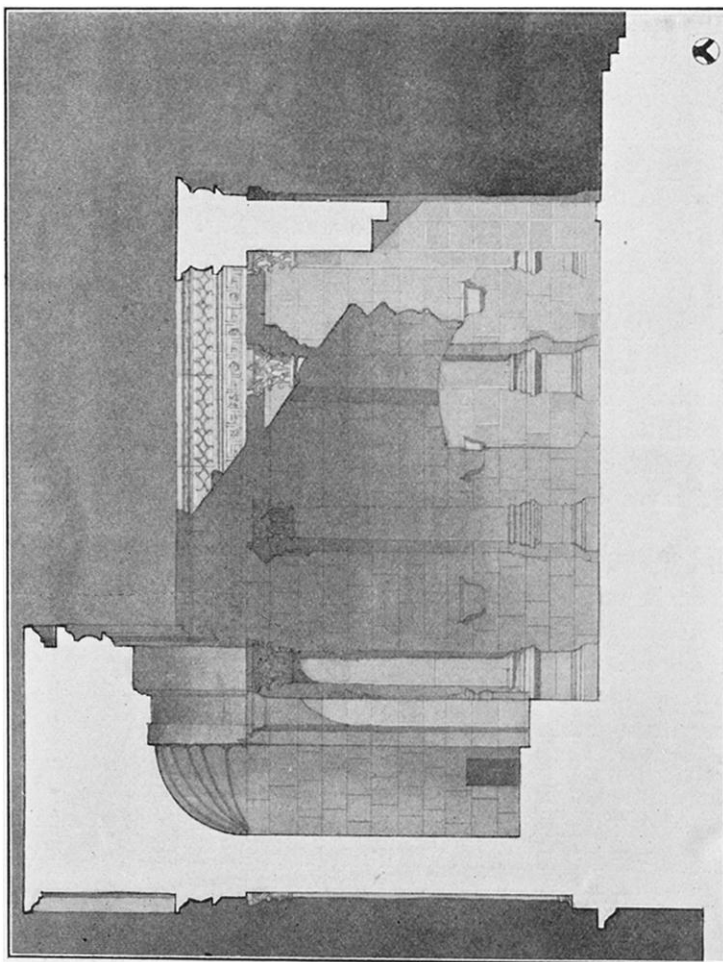


FIGURE 5. — CROSS-SECTION OF TYCHAION, RESTORED.

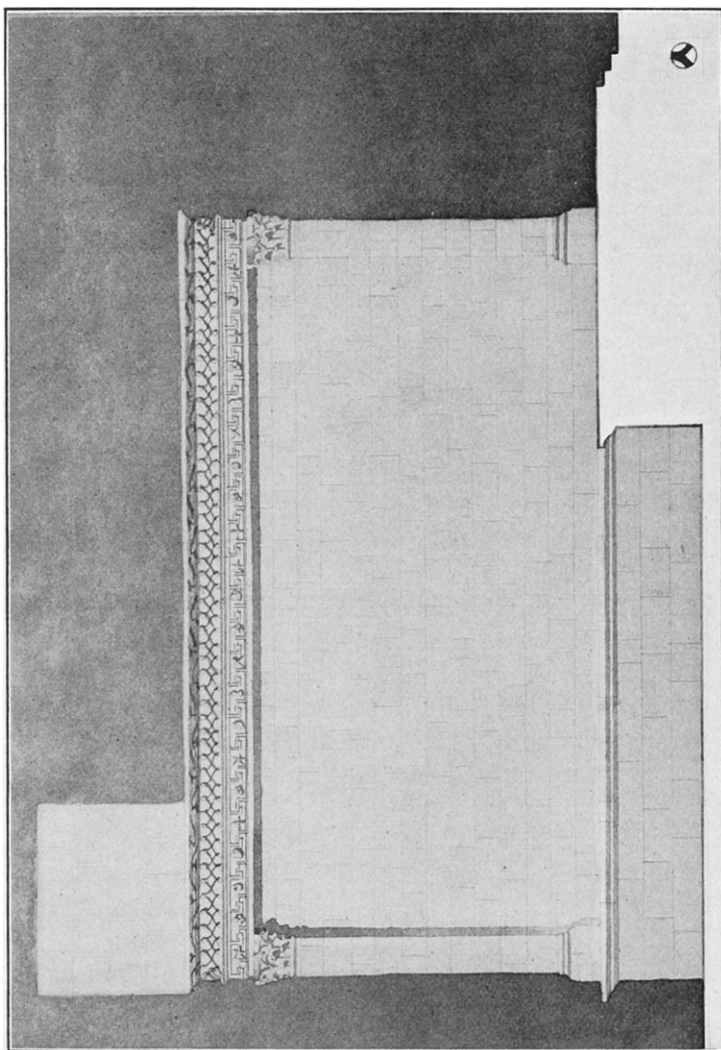


FIGURE 6. — SIDE VIEW OF TYCHAION, RESTORED.

a hypaethral temple is without precedent in Syria, it would seem to be the only solution admissible here, for all the other examples of temples of equal size have columns in the middle of the naos for the support of the roof. It is unlikely that the arches of the apse would have been left exposed to the action of the winds and the weather, when it was such a simple matter to place a roof over them, thus affording them protection and at the same time marking the temple conspicuously. The apse itself, which was practically a large niche, contained a statue which, according to an inscription high upon the curved wall, was gilded at the expense of one of the citizens of Aere.¹

Very probably the building was regarded merely as a wall to surround and protect the statue of the divinity. The architectural effect is heightened by the colonnade, remains of which can be seen surrounding the birkeh. A base moulding, consisting of a fillet above a large cyma recta, runs partially around the building, which is raised high in the rear to elevate it from the waters of the reservoir (Figs. 7 and 1) and breaks away from the wall to extend around the birkeh at a little more than half the distance from the rear end. There are four Corinthian pilasters at the angles of the temple, which support an entablature exactly similar in design to that of the interior. The bases of the pilasters are raised on a high plinth above which there is practically an Attic base, a scotia between two torus mouldings. The capitals are of good design, although several refinements are lacking, owing doubtless to the difficulty of carving the hard basalt. The entablature consists of a double-stepped architrave, on the upper part of which is carved a meander with various designs in the spaces. Unfortunately some of the carvings, probably the heads of pagan deities, have been hacked off by Christian or Mohammedan iconoclasts. The cymatium of the architrave consists of a small band of bead and reel, above which is an ovolo moulding carved with an egg and dart design, and over this a cavetto with a running foliate pattern. The frieze is pulvinated and carved with a single guilloche motive with flowers at the corners of the building and at the springing of the arch as it curves over

¹ Waddington, *op. cit.* 2413 h ; *C.I.G.* 4556.

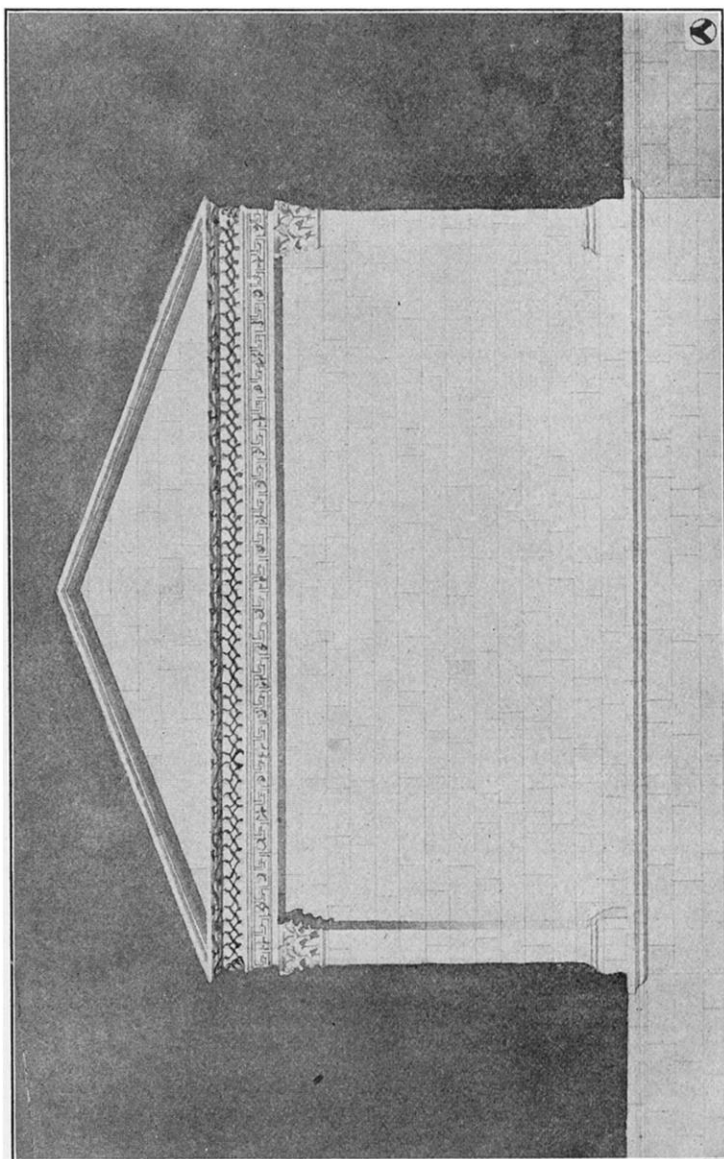


FIGURE 7. — REAR VIEW OF TYCHAION, RESTORED.

the apse. Above this the cornice is gone and the cyma recta and fillet are entirely conjectural, although there is evidence for them from ruins at other places in Syria, notably in the temples at 'Atil and Mushennef.¹ The foliate design on the cornice was commonly used, and it is improbable that this member would have been left plain, as the entablature is so

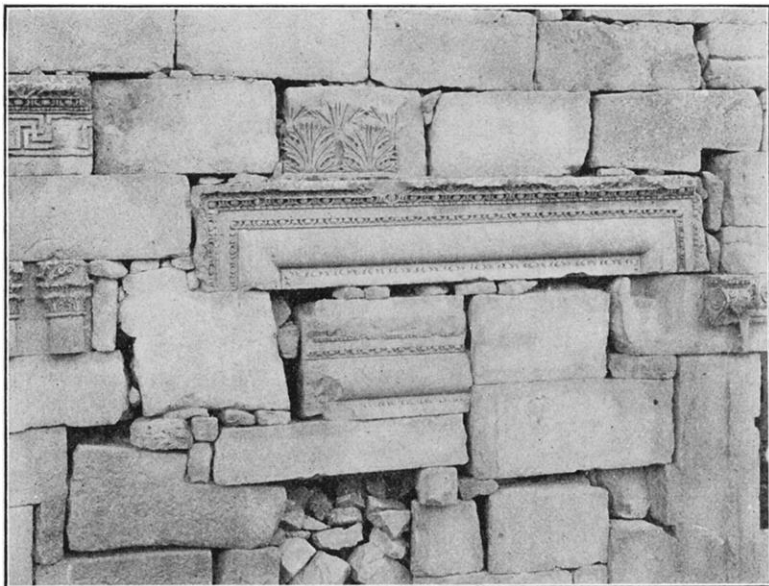


FIGURE 8. — DETAILS BUILT INTO WALL.

rich in decoration elsewhere. The gable roof at the south or apse end has also been assumed from these examples.

The main doorway (PLATE I) is of fine design, consisting of a flat moulding capped by an inverted egg and dart. This is surmounted by a small fillet, above which is a large pulvinated member which is covered by an inscription. Over this is another fillet, above which is a finely cut leaf and tongue, which in turn is surmounted by a plain band. Over this is a small bead and reel, with three beads touching one another, an ovolo carved with an egg and dart, this time in its normal position, and above this is a cavetto with a foliate design capped

¹ Butler, *op. cit.* pp. 345 and 349; Ward, *A.J.A.* XI, 1907, p. 4.

by a plain fillet. All these mouldings are returned at the sides of the doorway as supporting members for the lintel. The crowning members over the lintel have been assumed, but there is evidence for them. On the portal of the eastern basilica in the Serâyâ at Ẹanawât and also in the doorway of the so-called Philippeion at Shehbâ¹ such an arrangement can be

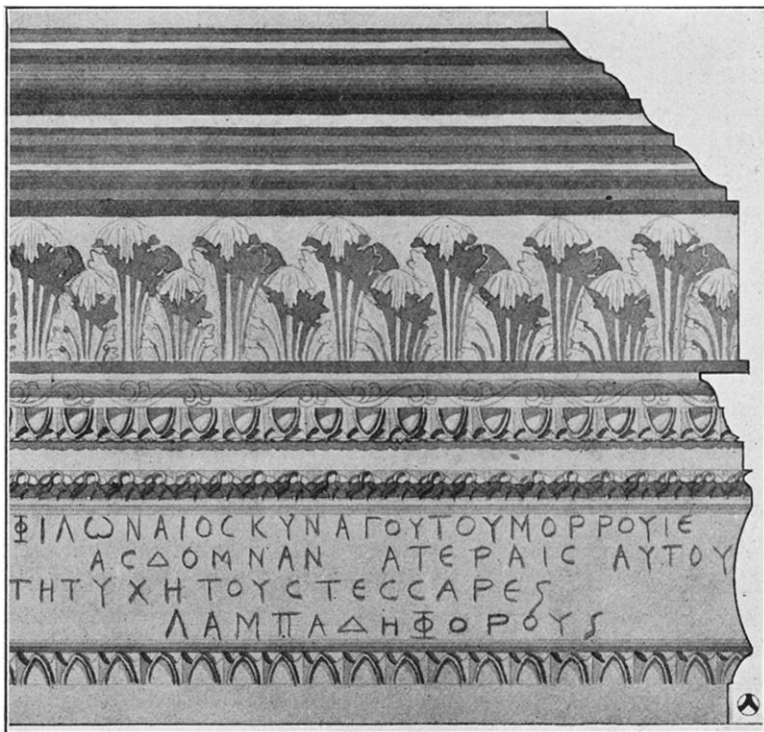


FIGURE 9. — MOULDINGS FROM A CROWNING MEMBER.

seen. Immediately above the lintel in its present position (Fig. 8) are the fragments of three acanthus leaves which very probably formed the lower moulding of some such crowning member. These mouldings are so interesting that I have made a drawing at a larger scale than was possible in the elevation (Fig. 9). The relieving arch over the doorway is such a common feature in Syrian architecture that it is safe to assume

¹ Butler, *op. cit.* pp. 360 and 381.

it here. On either side of the main portal are two smaller doorways which are hardly large enough to have served more than an ornamental purpose. The mouldings are plain, and at either side of the lintel are two consoles or parotids which have no other than a decorative function. Above these doorways so much of the north end has been rebuilt that it is impossible to know exactly what the ornament was. However, in the photograph (Fig. 8) the remains of two small coupled and engaged colonnettes can be seen which must have been the supporting members for an entablature over a small niche. The restoration of this niche has been based chiefly on that in the east façade of the basilica at Shaḡḡa.¹

The columns of the interior, as has been stated, are raised on pedestals which consist of a base, a die, and a cap. The shafts of the columns are built up in drums of varying heights and show both entasis and diminution. The entablature is similar to that of the exterior, which has been described in detail. Between the columns at the south end and on either side of the apse are the entrances to the side chambers. The mouldings of the doorways are of simple design. Above them and resting upon them is a pulvinated member which is carved with a foliate pattern. This is crowned by a cavetto with fillets and a cyma recta. These mouldings act as the support for two small pilasters which flank the doorways of the upper chambers. The pilasters are well executed and carry a triple-banded architrave capped by a cornice moulding. Above this is a double scroll with flowers in the spaces.

The temple was built throughout of black basalt in blocks of various sizes and sometimes of different heights, but finely cut and laid dry. Although it has been somewhat destroyed by its later occupants, much of the original beauty and charm remain. It is perhaps worthy of note that in plan the general outlines strikingly resemble those of the great Christian basilicas which followed it in the West.

LOUIS CURTISS CUMMINGS.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY,
May, 1909.

¹ Butler, *op. cit.* p. 367 ; De Vogüé, *op. cit.* pl. 15.